

REMARKS

Claims 3-8, 11-24, 26 and 28-32 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 3, 6, 8, 11-14, 17, 19, 20 and 28 are amended. Claims 29-32 are added. Claims 25 and 27 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in those claims. The amendments introduce no new matter as they are generally administrative, such as, for example, amending claims 6, 8, 17 and 19 to dependent form. Substantive amendments to claims 3 and 11 are supported by at least page 5, lines 15-26 of the specification, and claims 25 and 27, as originally filed. Reconsideration based on the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 6, indicates that claims 4, 5, 12-16, 25 and 27 recite allowable subject matter. Specifically, the Office Action states that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants appreciate this indication of allowability. The amendments to the claims as enumerated above and discussed below are undertaken based on this indication of allowability.

The Office Action, in paragraph 3, rejects claims 3, 11, 22, 23, 26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,426,735 to Henzen in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,417,785 to Nakamura. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 3 and 11 are amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter respectively of claims 25 and 27. For at least this reason, claims 3 and 11 recite allowable subject matter.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 22, 23, 26 and 28 are allowable as well for at least their respective dependence on allowable base claims.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3, 11, 22, 23, 26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the applied references are respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 4, rejects claims 6-8, 17-20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Henzen in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,687,956 to Itoh. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 6, 8, 17 and 19 are rewritten to dependent form to depend respectively from the allowable claims 3 and 11. As such, each of claims 6, 8, 17 and 19 are allowable at least for their respective dependence on allowable base claims as well as for the separately patentable subject matter which they recite. Applicants respectfully submit further that claims 7, 18, 20 and 24 are allowable as well for at least their dependence on allowable underlying claims.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 6-8, 17-20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the applied references are respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 5, rejects claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Henzen in view of Itoh, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,037,920 to Mizutome et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

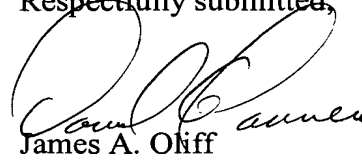
Applicants respectfully submit that claim 21 is allowable for at least its dependence on an allowable base claim. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the applied references are respectfully requested.

New claims 29-32 are allowable for their dependence on allowable base claims, and for additional features they recite.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 3, 6-8, 11, 17-24, 26 and 28-32, in addition to the allowable subject matter of claims 4, 5 and 12-16, are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:DAT/jfb

Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

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